

Determination: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

After reviewing Senate Bill 856 and weighing it against my record of municipal leadership, public safety governance, veteran service, and community engagement, the strongest and most defensible position is Favorable With Amendments.

Why

As a municipal leader responsible for public safety outcomes and community stability, I support policies that strengthen driver readiness while maintaining fair access to mobility. Reliable transportation is directly connected to employment, education, and family stability. At the same time, local governments experience firsthand the consequences of unsafe driving practices, particularly among inexperienced drivers.

Senate Bill 856 modernizes eligibility timelines and clarifies pathways from learner permits to full licensure. The bill maintains structured training requirements and reinforces supervised driving expectations. These provisions align with community safety priorities and reflect a balanced approach between access and accountability.

However, several areas require refinement to ensure equitable implementation and clear administrative execution.

Recommended Amendments

1. Clarify transition guidance for individuals currently in the licensing pipeline so applicants are not disadvantaged by mid process rule changes.
2. Require clear public education outreach prior to implementation so families, municipalities, and driver education providers understand updated timelines and requirements.
3. Include data reporting to the General Assembly after two years measuring safety outcomes, crash reductions, and participation impacts across age groups.
4. Ensure consistent application standards statewide to prevent uneven enforcement or administrative confusion across jurisdictions.

Testimony

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 856 with amendments.

In municipal government, we see how transportation access affects every aspect of community life. Safe and responsible drivers strengthen neighborhoods, support workforce participation, and reduce strain on local emergency response systems. Structured licensing pathways are not simply administrative processes. They are public safety tools.

The bill appropriately reinforces driver education, supervised practice, and accountability before full licensure. These measures support safer roadways while recognizing that individuals reach driving readiness through different life circumstances.

At the same time, implementation clarity is essential. Residents depend on predictable systems. Families, educators, and municipalities must clearly understand how eligibility changes apply during transition periods. Without this clarity, confusion may unintentionally limit access rather than improve safety.

Adding reporting requirements will also allow the State to evaluate whether the revised framework produces measurable improvements. Public policy should evolve based on results, particularly when roadway safety and youth mobility are involved.

My support reflects the need to balance access with responsibility. With the recommended amendments, Senate Bill 856 can strengthen driver preparedness while ensuring fairness, transparency, and effective statewide implementation.

Thank you for your consideration.